

Chatterbox #118 – Preparing for Christmas

Informal Contractions in this Episode

Informal contractions are unofficial short forms of other words, and they're usually only used in casual conversation. For example, when a native English speaker talks casually, they might say *gonna* instead of *going to*, or *whaddya* instead of *what do you*. Even though informal contractions are usually only used in spoken English, we include them in the Culips written transcripts to help you get used to how they're used and what they sound like.

These are the informal contractions used in today's episode, along with their meanings:

- **'cause**: because
- **gonna**: going to

Transcript

Maura: Hello everyone. And **happy holidays**.

Harp: **Happy holidays**. This is Harp.

Maura: And Maura.

Harp: And we're here at Culips, bringing you another great episode.

Maura: That's right. And don't forget to go to our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. Because on our website, you can become a member. And there's not much time left for you to get our great discount. If you're wondering about our discount, check us out on Facebook and you'll see the details there. And so Harp, we're slowly approaching the holiday season, and I was thinking about your work Christmas party, because I know you told me that you were organizing it. How's that going?

Harp: It's pretty good. It's quite a bit of work. We have to make sure we have gifts for everyone, and make sure that the place looks really nice and all the little details are fixed, but I think it's gonna be really fun, and I think everyone's gonna have a great time.

Maura: Yeah. You really have to start in advance, planning the party, don't you?

Harp: Yup. And unfortunately, we were a bit late in planning, but it'll all turn out, I think.

Maura: OK. So, on the same topic, let's get to our episode today.

- Harp: Yes. Today we're going to do a Chatterbox episode, and that's where we chat. We talk about cultural things, we interview people.
- Maura: And today we're going to talk about stuff to do with the holiday season. We're gonna talk about preparing for the holidays, because, really, the holiday season is just a handful of days, but the preparations start weeks, and for some people, even months, before.
- Harp: Yeah. So we're gonna start with talking about decorating for the holidays.
- Maura: And then we're going to talk about buying gifts.
- Harp: And we're going to finish with talking about planning for the big day.
- Maura: Right. All of those little details that you need to make for the specific days you'll be celebrating.
- Harp: Yeah. So let's get started with talking about decorating.
- Maura: Mmhmm. Well, the **decorations** make their appearance in the store so early nowadays.
- Harp: Yeah. It's true. It seems like they're coming out earlier and earlier every year.
- Maura: Well, usually the **decorations** get put on the shelf just after Halloween. Because in Canada, we have our Thanksgiving early; we have it in October. So we're done with Thanksgiving, we have Halloween, and after that, we don't have a holiday until Christmas, so that means as soon as Halloween is done, they can start putting Christmas things out.
- Harp: I went to a store this year and I saw **Christmas decorations** before Halloween.
- Maura: This year I was in a store a couple days before Halloween, and I actually saw the staff putting out the **Christmas decorations**, so you're right, they were out even a little bit before Halloween.
- Harp: It's crazy. Like I said, it's coming earlier and earlier every year.
- Maura: Yup. They do come out pretty early. But you know, there's a lot to do beforehand, so maybe we need to see all of the Christmas stuff early.
- Harp: Yeah. You're probably right. There is quite a bit of work that is involved with decorating.

- Maura: But you know, what I started thinking when I saw all of these **decorations** was that you'd think that after a year or two, people would have all of the **Christmas decorations** that they need, and then they're kind of set for at least 5 or 10 years. But somehow I guess there are some people who need to buy new **decorations** every year. I don't know.
- Harp: Yup. For me, I'm pretty much set. I use the same **Christmas decorations** every year. But I do have some friends who do a different theme. So one year they'll do all their **decorations** in red, or the next year it'll be silver and blue. So those are the people buying the **decorations** every year.
- Maura: Hmm... Yeah. **Come to think of it**, I do remember when my mother decided that she wanted to change her Christmas décor, and so she went out and bought ornaments that were colour coordinated. And before, growing up, they were just random ornaments that we liked.
- Harp: Did you have a lot of **decorations** that you had made at school over the years?
- Maura: Oh yeah, definitely. I think that's something that a lot of kids do. Especially in the younger years, you make a **Christmas decoration**, normally an ornament that goes on a **tree**.
- Harp: Oftentimes with your picture on it.
- Maura: Yeah. Well it is kind of a tradition, and it's nice to mark the year that you made it, and then you can keep it. And as years pass, that ornament becomes more and more sentimental.
- Harp: Yeah. That's what we do at my parents' house. We still have those same **decorations** and it's just funny to look at all the old pictures on the ornaments.
- Maura: I know that I have a couple ornaments that I now put on my **tree** that are from the year that I was born, and it says "Baby's first Christmas," and it says the year I was born.
- Harp: Wow! That's cool.
- Maura: Yeah. And of course, now they look out of date and retro, but, like I said, there's a sentimental value.
- Harp: I'm not the kind of person who likes a themed Christmas. I'm more into the sentimental, kind of the kitschy look.

- Maura: I totally agree. And I have to say, I'm not really one for decorating a lot. I think it's because I'm lazy. And I know that when I put everything up, I just have to **take it back down** in a couple weeks. What about you? Do you decorate a lot at home?
- Harp: I do quite a bit. I have to say, more and more every year. I really love Christmas and I love **Christmas decorations**, so I **put up a Christmas tree**, I **put up** a lot of different little ornaments on tables. I do a bit. Not as much as some people, but I like it.
- Maura: Yeah. I have to say that the years when I have decorated more, I feel **the Christmas spirit** more. When I don't decorate, I don't feel as **Christmassy**.
- Harp: When you were growing up, did your family decorate your house a lot?
- Maura: Yup. We definitely did. We had a tradition of all decorating **the tree** together and listening to Christmas music. And there were other small Christmas objects that were put around. Um... One of the things I can think of is, like, a ceramic **Christmas tree** with these little individual lights, and when you plugged it in, the lights lit up.
- Harp: When I think about it, childhood Christmases, I remember these really tacky-looking **garlands** that we would, kind of, wrap around anything that we could find, like, the staircase railing, or even around chair legs, anything we could wrap it around.
- Maura: You know, one thing that my mother still puts out is **a Christmas village**; a miniature **Christmas village**. And, again, it's these small little homes and shops with snow on them and they have lights inside and little people that you can set up walking around the village. My mom still sets that up and I am going to inherit it one day. And I'm actually really excited, because I love the way the small little **Christmas village** looks. It's so cute.
- Harp: That is cute. Now, some people decorate their house on the inside and the outside. Did you guys do that?
- Maura: We definitely did. We had **Christmas lights** on the outside and probably a wreath or something like that on our door. But now that I'm grown up, I usually don't decorate outside.
- Harp: Yeah. I don't decorate outside at all right now, because I just have a small little patio, but growing up, I only remember us having **Christmas lights** for maybe 1 or 2 years. And then I think my dad just didn't like that he had to change **the lights** all the time. And my dad actually kept **the lights** on all year round, so if it was someone's birthday, or if we were having a party, he would turn **the Christmas lights** on.

- Maura: Nice. Well, I do like when you start to see **Christmas lights** and you're driving around at night. They're very nice. And actually, the city, not just Montreal, but many cities in Canada, also have **Christmas decorations** and **Christmas lights**. **The Christmas lights** went up pretty early this year.
- Harp: You know, actually in Edmonton, my home town, there's a street, I forget the exact name of it, but at Christmas time they call it Candy Cane Lane, because all of the people who live on that street decorate the outsides of their houses so much. And they actually close all the traffic off and you have to walk down the street. And it's to raise money for the food bank and it's really pretty, because in Edmonton, you have snow pretty much every Christmas and people go crazy with their **decorations**, so it's fun.
- Maura: Yeah. I remember a house in my neighbourhood kind of like that when I was young, too, and we called it the gingerbread house, because they put **lights** on every rim of their house; on the roof, around the windows, and the door. It looked pretty cool.
- Harp: Oh no. These people go much more hardcore than that. They have the big **blow-up decorations**; they're decorating the outside trees, the shrubs, everything they can decorate.
- Maura: OK. So those are just some of our stories about decorating and how extreme some people can take it, and how little some people, like me, end up doing.
- Harp: Yeah. But let's move on to our next topic, about buying gifts.
- Maura: Right. Buying gifts is a huge part of Christmas. Of course, people get together and have dinner, but at some point, there's usually a **gift exchange**.
- Harp: Yeah. That's true. And usually, when kids are younger, it's a bigger deal and there are more presents. And some people have their whole families come together, so all their cousins come together, and they all open presents together. But for my family, it was usually just my parents and my two sisters, and we would each give each other one present.
- Maura: OK. Hmm... I think growing up, I usually exchanged presents with my immediate family, like you, but I also had **godparents**, and I would get Christmas gifts from my **godmother** and my **godfather**. But I didn't get presents from all my aunts and uncles and cousins. That would be an insane amount of gifts.
- Harp: Yeah. I do remember having friends who used to get presents from everyone; each of their aunts, each of their uncles, their grandparents, everyone who was related to them. And I would just get my four presents: one from my parents each and from my two sisters. And it was enough. It was fun.

- Maura: Mmhhh. Yup. And **that just goes to show** that there are so many ways that this holiday is celebrated. Some people don't exchange many gifts and other people exchange a lot. Nowadays, since I'm a bit older, I don't exchange that many presents with my family anymore, because we decided together that we didn't need to buy a lot of presents, and we found it nicer to just relax and spend time together. Because when you have to buy a lot of presents, it's quite stressful leading up to the day.
- Harp: Yeah. No, it's the same principle with my family, but sometimes we end up buying small presents if we're all together. Because we all live so far apart now, it's really rare that we all spend Christmas together. So if we do, we like to just have a little tradition and open something small. But it's a lot of work to try to send presents, so we definitely don't do that.
- Maura: Yeah. I have some friends who are originally from Europe, and they have to plan ahead to send gifts home, because they have **to take into account** that it's going to take a week or maybe 2 weeks to arrive. And another thing they have **to factor in** is how heavy the present is, because if it's a heavy present, it's going to be more expensive to send. So, when you have to send presents by mail, you want to buy something that's very light.
- Harp: Yeah. I remember when I was living in South Korea, I sent a lot of my family presents. And even some of my friends that I normally wouldn't buy presents for, I mailed them presents home. And, yeah, it's pretty expensive, 'cause you don't think about the weight of a present when you live close by and you're just giving them the actual present.
- Maura: Mmhhh. That's right. One thing that I do like to participate in though, if it ever arises, is **a secret Santa gift exchange**. And these can happen in a family, or with friends, or even at work. And we've talked about this in past episodes, but I'll explain it again. That's where you buy a gift for someone and they don't know who the gift is coming from. And you receive a gift too, but you don't know who's going to buy you a gift.
- Harp: Yeah. I love those. We often do them at work. You know, with a small group of friends or colleagues, we do a little secret Santa and then we go for a dinner or lunch and exchange presents.
- Maura: Yeah. Often in a secret Santa or other kinds of **gift exchange** games, there is a limit, too. Like, you only need to spend \$20, or you can't spend more than \$25. So it's not a really expensive gift that you have to buy.
- Harp: No. You're right. I do find, though, that people are just giving gift certificates more and more. So, really? Do we need to give each other money, basically? So we're doing it less at work now.
- Maura: Yeah. It's true. I think since they started using gift cards, for some reason, it

really became popular.

All right, all right. So let's now look at our last topic, because that's really what all of this holiday season is building towards: the actual day, or days, I should say. Usually the 24th of December, the 25th definitely, and often the 26th are days spent celebrating. And you usually don't wait till the last minute to get that together. You have your plans ready for those days. You know what you're going to be doing.

Harp: Yeah. Oftentimes, people are travelling, if they have family in different places. For example, if I go to Edmonton, I really need to plan ahead because, oof, the price of a plane ticket can really go up if I wait last-minute.

Maura: Yeah. It's true. If you're going to be travelling around Christmas, you've got to start thinking about booking your tickets at least maybe even 2 months before Christmas, if you want to get a price that's even reasonable. Because even 2 months in advance, they know it's going to be Christmas, so the prices are higher than they might usually be.

Harp: Yeah. That's true. But even if I'm staying in Montreal, you have to still prepare if you're receiving guests. You have to plan for dinner or lunch, whatever people are gonna be doing.

Maura: That's right. If you're having guests, then there's a lot to consider. There's all the food you'll need to buy, or if you're having a kind of potluck, you'll have to organize what each person is bringing. And if you're having a larger group—and around this time, you often have big groups of people—you might need to get extra chairs or tables. That always happened when my family got together, because there were too many people.

Harp: Yup. That's actually what I'm preparing for right now, because this year, we've invited all of my boyfriend's family to come join us for dinner at our home, and there'll be about twenty five people. And normally, we can have about eight people over for dinner at one time. So I have to figure out getting tables and chairs, and figure out the seating arrangement.

Maura: Honestly, you're brave. I've never had a really big family function at my place. One of the reasons is because all of my family lives far away. But if I were to do that, I would feel so nervous because of all the food planning. You want to make sure you have enough, and even more than enough, because you don't want people to be hungry, and you want everything to be warm and cooked well at the same time. You don't want the, maybe, turkey to be ready while the stuffing gets cold or the potatoes are not quite ready yet. You know? Am I stressing you out talking about it?

Harp: Not at all. But you sound really stressed out. Actually, since I was maybe 13, I've had to prepare Christmas dinner for my parents, so I'm pretty used to

having to do the big dinner. So I'm ready. It's more seating arrangements that I need to figure out right now.

Maura: Mmhmm. Well, a really nice situation to have when you're planning your big day is that you're going over to someone else's house; they're taking care of everything. Maybe they've asked you to bring a dessert or an appetizer or a bottle of wine. You just get to show up and enjoy the day with your family or friends.

Harp: Yeah. That's definitely more relaxing, but I love receiving people at my home, so it'll be fun.

Maura: Very nice. And I love going to other people's homes, which is what I'm doing this year, so it's perfect.

Harp: Nice.

Maura: All right. Well, I think that about wraps it up for this week's episode.

Harp: I have to go wrap some presents, so we should finish right now.

Maura: Good. I'm glad to hear you didn't leave it to the last minute.

Harp: Nope. I'm all prepared.

Maura: OK. So, we first talked about decorating for the holidays, because decorating does start at least a couple weeks before the big day arrives.

Harp: Yeah. And then we talked about buying gifts, because you don't want to be shopping on Christmas Eve for everyone that you need to buy gifts for.

Maura: No. And then we talked about making all of your plans and arrangements for the actual days of celebration.

Harp: Yeah. So, we wish all of you a happy holiday season, however or wherever you're celebrating.

Maura: And over the next two weeks, we'll be bringing you a couple classic Culips episodes.

Harp: Yeah. So we hope you enjoy those, and we'll talk to you in the New Year.

Maura: That's right. And if you haven't already done so, we're gonna remind you one more time to check out our website, Culips.com. That's C-U-L-I-P-S.com. And remember, you can still take advantage of our deal and become a member.

Harp: Yes. That's it for us today. Bye everyone.

Maura: Bye.

Detailed Explanation

Happy holidays and merry Christmas

In Canada, there is a bit of controversy over how people should greet each other in December. Traditionally, people used to wish everyone **merry Christmas** during the holiday season. However, as Canada grew to be a multicultural society, this expression fell out of favour. It is now more politically correct to use the greeting **happy holidays**.

Canada and other multicultural societies have populations that are made up of people from all over the world. These people have very different religious beliefs and traditions. This means that some people celebrate Christmas and some people don't. While it isn't extremely offensive to wish someone **merry Christmas** who doesn't celebrate Christmas, in order to respect the beliefs of everyone, the religiously neutral expression **happy holidays** began to be used more often around a decade ago.

In Canada, there is a separation of church and state. This is the same idea behind the **happy holidays** versus **merry Christmas** debate. In Canada, the government, stores, banks, restaurants, etc. all use the greeting **happy holidays** so that they can appeal to all Canadians, and not just Christian Canadians who celebrate Christmas.

However, not all Canadians are happy about this. Recent polls have reported that up to 80% of the population believe that **merry Christmas** is the only Christmas greeting that should be used.

It's up to you to use whatever greeting you feel most comfortable with, but to be safe, we recommend you use **happy holidays** when talking with people you don't know very well. If someone wishes you **merry Christmas**, and you don't celebrate Christmas, a polite response is to say "Thank you. You too!"

Come to think of it

You can use the expression **come to think of it** when you suddenly realize or remember something. In this episode, Maura says **come to think of it** when she remembers that at some point in her childhood, her mother changed all of their Christmas decorations.

Whenever you suddenly remember some extra information that's important, you can use **come to think of it** to introduce your new thoughts to the people you're talking to.

Here are a couple more examples with **come to think of it**:

Peter: I'm going to the supermarket. Would you like me to grab anything for you?

Jane: Nope, I think I'm OK.

Peter: OK. See you later.

Jane: Bye. Oh wait! **Come to think of it**, I think I'm running low on milk. Can you buy some for me?

Peter: Sure. No problem.

Cindy: Have you ever had a job that you really hated?

Beth: No, not really. I've been pretty lucky.

Cindy: I once worked as a dishwasher, and I really didn't like it.

Beth: Oh, **come to think of it**, I did work at a fast food restaurant when I was 16, for, like, a month. That job wasn't too great.

To put up and to take down decorations

Christmas decorations are the ornaments, lights, and wreaths that people display around their homes during the month of December. It would be weird to have Christmas decorations out all year round, so people have to display, or **put up the decorations**, at the start of December and then put them away again, or **take down the decorations**, once Christmas is over.

We use the same expressions to describe what stores and shopping malls do when they decorate for the holidays. However, usually stores **put up their Christmas decorations** much earlier than people decorate their houses. It's not uncommon to see stores **putting up their decorations** in early November. Both people and stores usually **take down holiday decorations** in early January, right after New Year's Day.

Here are a couple more examples with these expressions:

Jimmy: Mom, can we **put up our Christmas tree and decorations** now?

Mom: No, it's only November 19th. It's too early. We'll start to decorate in December.

Tammy: I always feel a little sad when it's time to **take down the Christmas decorations** for another year.

Phil: Not me! I get bored of Christmas decorations after about a week, and I can't wait to **take them down** so things can get back to normal.

The Christmas spirit

When someone is in the **Christmas spirit**, it means that they feel more generous than usual, more tolerant of others, and overall like a better and happier person.

Some of our understanding of what **the Christmas spirit** is comes from the famous Charles Dickens novel *A Christmas Carol*. In the book, Christmas is portrayed as a holiday when family, compassion, and generosity are valued. These characteristics still define what Christmas means to many people. So, when someone is in the **Christmas spirit**, they embody these traits and treat other people with respect, kindness, and good will.

Here are a couple more examples with **the Christmas spirit**:

Naomi: You should make a donation to the orphanage I volunteer for. They really need help, and giving to others who are in need is a great way to get into the **Christmas spirit**.

Ron: Sure, I'd be happy to help.

Tim: I'm having a hard time getting into the **Christmas spirit** this year. Do you have any ideas of what I could do to feel better?

Shu: Why don't you volunteer at a soup kitchen? I do that every year, and it always helps me to remember what Christmas is all about.

Christmassy

In English, we can add a **Y** to the end of many nouns to make them into adjectives. For example, we can turn *salt* into *salty* to describe the taste of food, or *rain* into *rainy* to describe the weather.

Many English speakers take this a step further, and when they are speaking (but never when they're writing), they turn nouns into adjectives that are not really actual words. This is what happens with **Christmassy**. The noun Christmas has been transformed into an adjective.

In this episode, Maura says that she doesn't feel **Christmassy** when she doesn't put up Christmas decorations. She uses the word **Christmassy** to describe how she feels. When someone feels **Christmassy**, they are in the Christmas spirit.

Here's another example with **Christmassy**:

Alexa: Let's do something **Christmassy**, like going ice skating or watching a Christmas movie.

Chris: Yeah, sounds good. How about we go for a walk in the snow?

To factor something in

When you **factor something in**, you consider the extra costs or benefits that might be associated with doing something. For example, in this episode, we hear that Maura's friends in Europe have to **factor in the costs** associated with sending heavy packages in the mail. When they send something heavy, it really increases the cost of shipping. So before buying a present to send to Canada, they have to **factor in the weight** of the item and the extra cost of shipping something heavy.

Here are a couple more examples with **to factor something in**:

Terry: We should go to The Chalet for dinner on our anniversary.

Frieda: That would be amazing. I've heard a lot of good things about their food, but I think it's too expensive. When you **factor in a bottle of wine** and a 20% tip, it'll end up costing us around \$200 for one meal.

Terry: That's true. Maybe we should go somewhere a little less expensive.

Jerry: Whoa. There is an amazing seat sale on right now, and plane tickets to London are only \$300.

Gao: For a return ticket?

Jerry: Yeah!

Gao: Tax included?

Jerry: I don't think so.

Gao: Airline taxes are super expensive. By the time you **factor in the taxes**, that ticket will end up being closer to \$700.

Jerry: Oh, that's a shame. I would love to go to London.

Classic Christmas decorations

During December, many Canadians decorate their houses with **Christmas decorations**. These **decorations** can take many different forms, and we'll explain some of the most popular ones here.

A garland: A **garland** is a string of branches (usually pine), sometimes decorated with little flowers or berries, that people use to decorate their fireplace mantles or staircase banisters. Sometimes people wrap **garlands** into circles to make wreaths that they hang on the wall or on doors.

A Christmas village: A **Christmas village** is a small model of a town that's decorated for Christmas. Usually, the town looks like it comes from an older era and the people, cars, and shops look old fashioned. A **Christmas village** might feature a small downtown street with a family walking down the sidewalk while window-shopping.

A blow-up decoration: **Blow-up decorations** are Christmas decorations that people display outside of their houses. They are inflatable, and must be filled up with air before they can be displayed. Common **blow-up decorations** include: Santa Claus, reindeer, and candy canes.

Christmas lights: It's very common for people (especially people in suburban Canada) to hang **Christmas lights** outside their homes. Strings of **lights** can be bought at almost any department store. These **lights** can be attached to the gutters that line most roofs.

Christmas tree: Another very common decoration is the **Christmas tree**. Displaying a **Christmas tree** in your house is a tradition that dates back to the 15th century, and first started happening in Germany. These days in Canada, most people display an artificial plastic **tree** in their homes. This is because it's easier to keep—an artificial **Christmas tree** doesn't need to be watered, there are no pine needles to clean, and it doesn't need to be thrown away every year. But some people do buy real **Christmas trees**, which are sold outside of many large stores during the holiday season.

Godparents

Godparents are people who promise to be responsible for a child if the child's real parents pass away or get very sick. **Godparents** also help raise the child by taking a special interest in them. Traditionally, **godparents** helped with a child's spiritual growth and promised to teach the child about the Christian religion. But the religious aspect of the **godparent** tradition has diminished in recent years, and it's now common for some children to have **godparents** that act only as mentors, but not as spiritual teachers.

Godparents are chosen by a child's real parents, and are usually very close friends of the parents. A male **godparent** is called a **godfather** and a female, a **godmother**. Similarly, a **godchild** is called a **godson** if male and a **goddaughter** if female.

Here are a couple more examples with **godparents**:

Rhonda: We should ask Fred and Jana to be our baby's **godparents**. They'd be so great!

Nathan: Yeah I think they'd be a great fit. Let's run it by them and see what they think.

Zach: What did you do last weekend?

Penelope: I went to Toronto to visit my **godparents**. They're getting older now, so I like to make some time every year to go see them.

That goes to show

That goes to show is a commonly used expression that's used when people want to say that something has been proven. In this episode, Maura uses **that goes to show** to make the point that families' different Christmas gift-giving traditions prove that there are many different ways that Christmas can be celebrated.

So when you want to express that something proves something else, you can say **that goes to show**. It's common to hear people also say **that just goes to show**. Both expressions mean the same thing, and it's your choice to decide what you'd like to use.

Here are a couple more examples with ***that goes to show***:

Gilles: The weatherman said on the news last night that it would be sunny all day today, but it's raining like crazy. I didn't even bring my umbrella to work! I'm going to get soaked on the way home.

Kim: **That just goes to show** that you can never trust weather forecasts. They can be wrong, so you have to be prepared for the worst.

Randy: My car was stolen last night.

Shane: That's terrible. What happened?

Randy: It was partly my fault. I ran into the grocery store for a minute to pick up some milk and I forgot to lock my doors. When I came out, it was gone.

Shane: I'm sorry that happened to you. I guess **that goes to show** that you can never be too careful.

To take something into account

The expression ***to take something into account*** is very similar to another expression we explored in this episode: ***to factor something in***. When you **take something into account**, you pause to consider all the information or facts you know before making a decision.

Let's return to Maura's example of her friends in Europe who need to send gifts in the mail. Before they purchase gifts, they need **to take into account** how much it will cost to ship the items. In other words, they need to think about how much the gifts weigh and how much it will cost to ship the gifts before they buy them.

When you **take something into account**, you think about all the consequences of an action before you do it.

Here are a couple more examples with ***to take something into account***:

Seth: For my vacation this year, I had originally planned to drive to California, but I didn't **take into account** how far away it is. It would take me a week just to get there.

Cindy: Why don't you fly there? Or take a road trip to Florida instead?

Seth: Hmm... Florida. I've never been there. Maybe I'll go there instead.

Heather: I'm going to get a new cell phone. Do you have any suggestions about what type I should get?

Neko: Definitely get a smartphone. Just make sure that you **take into account** how much the data plans cost before you make a decision. They can really get expensive quickly.

A gift exchange

Informal **gift exchanges** are common in large families or at workplace staff parties. A game called *Secret Santa* is often played to make things even more fun and light-hearted. Every person who participates must buy one present for another member of the group. All the participants are randomly assigned a person to buy a present for. A price limit is usually determined so that it's affordable for all the players. Usually people buy gifts that cost between \$10 and \$20. Secret Santa allows everyone to give and get a gift without having to purchase presents for many people.

One popular variation of Secret Santa is called *Stealing Secret Santa*. In this variation of the game, the players must wrap their presents so that they're disguised and it's impossible to figure out what the present is just by looking at it. Just like in Secret Santa, the players all are assigned one person to purchase a gift for. When it's time to open the presents, one person's name is called at a time. Players can decide to open the present that was bought for them or they can steal a previously opened present that belongs to another player. This is a really popular office party Christmas game.

Quiz

- 1. Which of the following are NOT typical Christmas decorations?**
 - a) wreaths
 - b) lights
 - c) shrubs
 - d) garlands

- 2. What's the name of a gift-giving game that's popular at office Christmas parties?**
 - a) Secretly Santa
 - b) Santa of Steal
 - c) Santa Steals
 - d) Stealing Secret Santa

- 3. What expression can be used when you want to show that something proves something else?**
 - a) That's proven of course.
 - b) That goes to show that...
 - c) That's going to shows...
 - d) That's just what you think.

- 4. What do you do when you take something into account?**
 - a) ignore everything and do what feels best
 - b) consider all the relevant information before making a decision
 - c) visit an accountant
 - d) make a list

- 5. What is godparents' main responsibility?**
 - a) to mentor their godchildren
 - b) to ignore their godchildren
 - c) to help their godchildren find jobs
 - d) to lend their godchildren money

- 6. Which of the following Christmas decoration is inflatable?**
- a) a blow-up candy cane
 - b) a Christmas village
 - c) a wreath
 - d) a Christmas light
- 7. Which of the following is an ending that can be added to a noun to turn it into an adjective?**
- a) -es
 - b) -ing
 - c) -z
 - d) -y
- 8. Which of the following expressions can you use when you suddenly remember or realize something?**
- a) for a second
 - b) I thought of it
 - c) come to think of it
 - d) I think it
- 9. Now that Christmas is over, I guess I have to _____ the Christmas decorations.**

Fill in the blank.

- a) go up
- b) come down
- c) put up
- d) take down

Answers:

1.c 2.d 3.b 4.b 5.a 6.a 7.d 8.c 9.d